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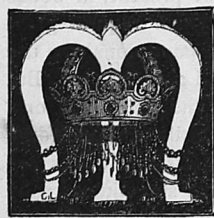
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INDUSTRIAL ART

DESIGN IN SILVERWARE.



ANY cups are still in existence bearing the general characteristics of the one by George Wechter, herewith illustrated, but few, we believe, exhibit the same bold and picturesque variety of graceful forms. The outline is of the most simple description — its richness and beauty depending upon the skill with which the various bands are interlaced and made to combine with the figures, the masks, the groups of flowers, and other details usually found in ornamental works of the Renaissance period.

In the later years of the sixteenth century, the German goldsmiths dropped so much of the earlier national feeling and adopted so largely the Italian style and manner that it is not easy always to distinguish whose the work may be. A fair guide is the form of the cups or vases, which always retained a certain stamp of originality. Moreover nothing can be more graceful than the arabesques which enrich German work of that date in the precious metals, or more exquisite than the twisted figures which supply the handles.

In the example of seventeenth century workmanship illustrated herewith, notwithstanding the general beauty of the design, we find something of the defects which characterize certain overwrought productions of the Renaissance. While the very natural-looking frog perched on the knob of the lid may be permitted perhaps by reason of his isolation from the general ornament, which is strictly conventional, we cannot accept with approval the child seated on the thumb-piece of the handle. With work before us, however, of such undoubted merit as this of good master Wechter, it is almost captious to criticise. Compare it, say, with such an English or American tankard of the present day as is called a "presentation cup"—for it is on such an object that the great resources of an Elkington or a Tiffany are called into play—and what a difference do we see! Mr. Richard Redgrave, in his "Manual of Design," well indicates the reason of the decadence of the modern silversmith. "A great cause of the faults noticeable in works in the precious metals seems to be," he says, "that they have received their design rather from the artist than the ornamentist; thus we

have figures having no constructive connection with the work ornamented, but rather of the nature of statuettes perched wherever a ledge or shelf offers accommodation for them; these are generally as imitatively treated as the material used and the powers of the artist permit, and are applied to inkstands, candelabra, and works of the like kind requiring a purely ornamental consideration. Many centre-pieces, racing-cups, and testimonials are treated merely as groups would be by the sculptor, although the lowest style of his art has but too frequently been adopted, and imitations of textures, chain and plate mail, and such laborious little-nesses, made a point of, rather than that nobler view of art which, discarding miniature and strictly imitative details, seeks by grandeur of form and largeness of

"If we contemplate some of the inventions of the artists, and some of the thoughts which they have wrought out, we shall be indeed surprised that such puerilities could be dwelt upon long enough to execute them as works of art, and still more that manufacturers, so shrewd as they generally are, should be found to engage in their production, were it not sufficiently evident that there is a large and wealthy public whose taste does not rise above such art, proved by becoming its patrons and purchasers. What can justify the employment of the precious metals, and what ought to be the more precious labors of artists, upon huntsmen and ploughboys, to render them with all the coarseness of their garments and the texture of their hose? or who but the givers of a testimonial, relying on the known

taste of its receiver, would require art to be degraded into the mere imitation of a hedgerow occurrence on a hunting-day when the sport was successful—knee-breeches and top-boots being items as important in the group as the hounds, horses, and the portraits of the individuals whose good-fellowship it commemorates? It is such art in the more precious metals, employed on such thoughts, that leads, in the imitative manufactures, to the many paltry inventions which are found to prevail therein. Rachel at a well in a rock under an imitative palm-tree draws—not water, but ink; Burns's shepherdess would find the same black fluid in the formless well by her side; a grotto of oyster-shells with children beside it contains, not a light, but an ink-vessel; the milk-pail on a maiden's head contains, not goat's milk, as the animal by her side would lead you to suppose, but a taper. Such works are akin to épergnes with the hippopotamus and his keeper; or Paul and Virginia under a palm-tree which upholds the glass for flowers on its top; or Apollo dancing, supporting at the same time a



RENAISSANCE DESIGN FOR A SILVER CUP.

MADE BY GEORGE WECHTER IN 1620.

manner to make us forget the scale of the work in the dignified style of its treatment. Now, if it is proper that these works should be consigned to the hands of the artist, he is bound to treat them according to the laws of his own art, not only by a noble style, but also by making them, as groups, truly statuesque, and combining the parts so that they form an agreeable whole in all possible directions of view. Above all, the thoughts which, as works of art, they serve to embody should be such as are worthy of being illustrated on metals of great value, which, enriched by true art, are enhanced in worth a hundredfold.

glass épergne twice his own size; and inventions of equal or greater novelty wrought out with great waste of skill and labor. Even when we find really artistic works in this style, of which happily there are many examples, it is more than doubtful whether the ornamentist would not have been more suitably employed upon them in obtaining an ornamental and architectural construction, ere art was called in to aid in their completion.

"It must be owned that our own countrymen are greatly deficient in the treatment of the precious metals as the medium of art. The truth seems to be that here

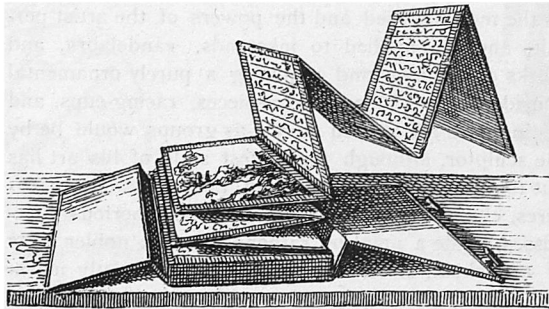
one artist designs the work, and perhaps makes the model, while another is employed to produce it in the metal. Thus we find works designed with great ability, and modelled with much knowledge, and evidently by artists of great professional excellence, yet these works are completed in the metal with every possible littleness of imitation, serving only to degrade and vulgarize the art it is employed upon; and this frequently is caused by the surface treatment and the mode of execution, wherein imitation has taken the place of art. Thus the true artist does not produce the texture of the fur of animals hair by hair, but gives its general expression by some conventional rendering, by the indications at the parts where the skin folds, or by tooling to emulate the lustre of its gloss. In the same way true art does not imitate the materials of our dress by the threads of its manufacture, but indicates them rather by the shape and contour of the foldings. Yet in the works under examination the surface is often subjected by the workman to a most labored treatment, labor without knowledge, which dwells more upon hairs and threads, upon details and buttons, than on the form of a joint, or the bones of an extremity: the one is a labor that requires no exercise of thought, nothing but mere dexterity; the other requires a workman not only educated into a knowledge of the parts, but who can enter into the feeling and intentions of the designer. This dwelling with complacency on mere labor, and this evident satisfaction with its tedious facilities, can only arise from the habit of giving the models of the superior artist into less skilful hands, to be completed in metal.

"Again, in the higher works in silver the true artist has the boldness to regard the material, rich and costly as it is, merely as the vehicle of the art he adds to it; and that lustre and brilliancy, which is one of the great excellencies of the rarer metals, he subdues by acids to

designed and artistically modelled, are loaded with toolings and burnishings, are matted and frosted, and have every other expedient attempted, to show the silver rather than to exhibit the art."

THE ART OF BOOKBINDING.

LAST year the subject of bookbinding was treated fully in these pages, chiefly from an historical standpoint. In resuming it and introducing some additional examples by the best masters of the art, a few remarks



CHINESE BINDING.

on the matter of design, to counteract a direction largely seen in the general works of the time, we believe will not be out of place. As a writer in *The (London) Academy* recently truly remarked, "the ignorance exhibited by otherwise cultivated men and women as to what it is that constitutes good binding is often deplorable. Those who would be ashamed to admire a bad picture will sometimes express pleasure at the sight of a piece of gaudy book-binding that makes a book-lover shudder."

This tendency consists in overlooking the only true intent of the art—the appropriate protection of literary works—in order to make it a vehicle for such gaudy ornamentation and decorative display as shall serve to attract to their contents; the outside garb being a presumed measure of the inner excellence, a practice not more degrading to art than it really is to literature. Such attempts induce the use of crude and harsh colors, and lead to excess in gilding; to heavy and coarse imitations of carved work in leather, gutta-percha, and even less durable materials; to perspectives and pictures on covers; to improper and inconsistent applications of metal work, and numerous other objectionable practices, which, as they do not tend to utility, and are opposed to the true spirit of the binder's labors, must be avoided if the art is to attain to the simple excellence of the mediævalists, or to the chaste richness of the binders of the sixteenth century. It is no doubt admissible, nay desirable, that the outside decoration of a book should have some reference in its ornament to the inside contents; but still the details chosen should be amenable to ornamental treatment, should not be mere conceits, and, as has been so often reiterated, should not be mere reproductions of the ornament proper for a totally different material. Thus a painter's palette, with its range of tints prepared for study, let into the cover, can hardly be regarded as the appropriate binding for a work on color, apart from the impossibility of any symmetrical arrangement of the object itself, or of the tints upon it, for its newly adopted purpose. Neither is the perspective delineation of the apse of a cathedral a proper ornamentation for the cover of a "Church Service,"

mosaics should give the appearance of relief, although the fine old Grolier bindings and other works of the Renaissance period sometimes offend against this rule.

Another class of errors arises from mere imitation of details without full consideration of their intent and use. Thus, formerly, when the heavy church services were really bound in boards richly ornamented, hinges were a necessary appendage, as also were bosses, which by their projection beyond the surface served to protect any delicate carving, rich tooling, or rare metal work inlaid into the cover; and, at present, in books of constant use, of large size, which require great strength, and come under the same conditions, the use of these appendages is desirable and appropriate. But that which is proper for a copy of the Scriptures or a church service for the lectern, is hardly suitable for a book for the pocket; yet these miniature works are ornamented with hinges and bosses, sometimes really in metal, and sometimes only imitated as tooled work on the surface of the leather.

Binding to be beautiful should combine solidity with convenience for handling, and flexibility. Before the invention of printing had made books common, the bindings were often finished by silversmiths and jewelers, and occasionally made and decorated by the author himself. The monks not only bound and ornamented their books, but prepared their own parchment. They shot the deer in the chase, and when they had no hunting-ground connected with their institutions we read of license being given them by lords and princes to hunt in their domains. Charlemagne gave one to the Abbot of St. Bertin, and Geoffroy Martel, Count of Anjou, ordered that the hides of one-tenth of the hinds of the Island of Oleron should be given to an abbey which he had founded at Saintes. But simple leather was not as solid as they wished, so wood was used to stiffen the sides, and thus each book contained the germs of its own destruction; for the worms from the wood were sure sooner or later to pierce the paper and ruin the volume. The wooden sides, also, greatly increased the weight of the books and made them very

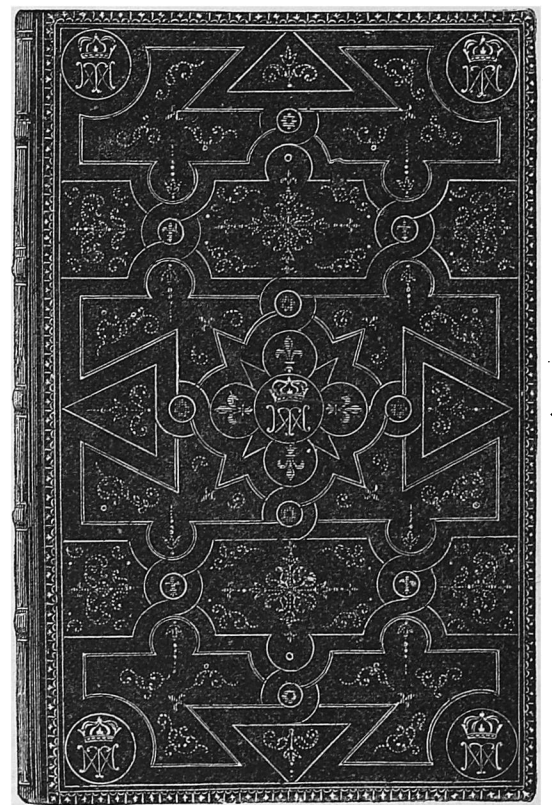


BINDING MADE FOR GROLIER, WITH HIS NAME AND DEVICE.

prevent the glare from interfering with the forms of art. To the eye, silver, so treated, might be so much zinc, did not the informing mind and the beautiful art enshrined in it at once bespeak the valuable metal which alone is capable of rendering such a noble return for the artist's labors. The metal so used serves only to display the art; but our workers in the precious metals have not yet arrived at such a state of virtue; the value of the mere silver is too great in the eyes of the public to be given up, and the full glitter of its polish must be sought to satisfy their desire for cost and magnificence. From the same cause it is, no doubt, that figures, well

any more than the host of treatments in the same direction, consisting of the fronts of cathedrals, oriel and rose windows, and stone tracery of many kinds, so often adopted for such purposes.

In all tooled work and block impressions, bookbinding requires flatness of treatment as one of its first principles; interiors of churches, perspectives of tunnels, and even figures, pictorially used, are quite out of place. Heraldry and heraldic devices should be displayed flat, and even strap-work, or mere combinations of lines, should not be arranged so as to give the appearance of projection, any more than colored materials or

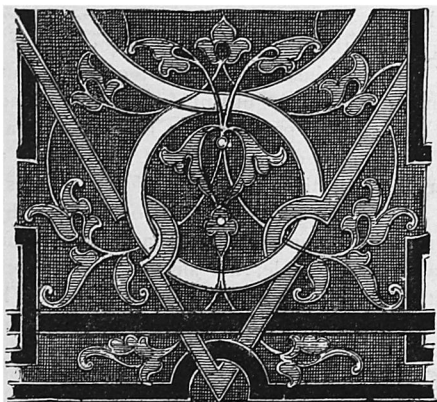


BINDING WITH THE CIPHER OF MARIA THERESA OF AUSTRIA, IN GASCON STYLE.

unwieldy. In the Bibliothèque, Laurentienne in Florence, there is an original manuscript of Petrarch, a copy of some letters of Cicero, bound in this way, which is so heavy that, having fallen upon the leg of the poet, it inflicted such a severe wound that he was obliged to have the limb amputated. Some of the devotional books of the Middle Ages were so ponderous, that little wheels were placed under them that they might be the more easily moved; with their metal corners, projecting nail-heads and locks, they must have looked like small chests.

It was the fashion in the Middle Ages to give the Gospels and other devotional books very splendid bindings. Precious material of every sort was used,

gold, silver, gems, enamels, inlaid work, antique ivories. The clasps were engraved and enriched with jewelled knobs. If the coverings was of velvet, or cloth of gold, or figured leather, it was studded with gilt nails, which ornamented and at the same time preserved the bindings. In the great churches of England the records show that there must have been great lavishness on the part of the monks in the matter of binding. Salisbury Cathedral had in the year 1222, a text, or book of the Gospels, bound in solid gold, ornamented with



MOTIVE FOR A BINDING, MADE FOR GROLIER. 1521.

twenty sapphires, six emeralds, eight topazes, eight alemandine stones, eight garnets, and twelve pearls. In 1315, Canterbury reckoned as many as seven texts sheathed in gold and precious stones. Besides these golden, there were many more silver texts. There is a remarkably fine specimen of this style of binding, in silver parcel gilt, in the British Museum. For the manufacture of these magnificent volumes a room called the scriptorium was set apart in every great abbey. Here several persons were constantly employed, not only in transcribing and illuminating the service books for the choir, but also books for the library, and binding them. Ingulphus, of the Abbey of Croyland, speaking of the lending of books, says: "Our books, as well the smaller unbound volumes as the larger ones which are bound, are altogether forbid."

The earliest known instance of the use of ivory for binding is in the Roman Diptych; but it appears to have come into very general use during the fourteenth and early part of the fifteenth centuries, when the art of carving in this beautiful material had reached perfection. In the Douce collection at Goderich Court, Herefordshire, England, is a remarkably fine example of the time of Edward I., and Mr. George Field, of Clapham Common, has several of the most elaborate character and the most exquisite execution. These diptychs are usually divided into ranges of scriptural subjects, separated by tracery or niches with figures of the apostles, and surmounted with gorgeous canopies.

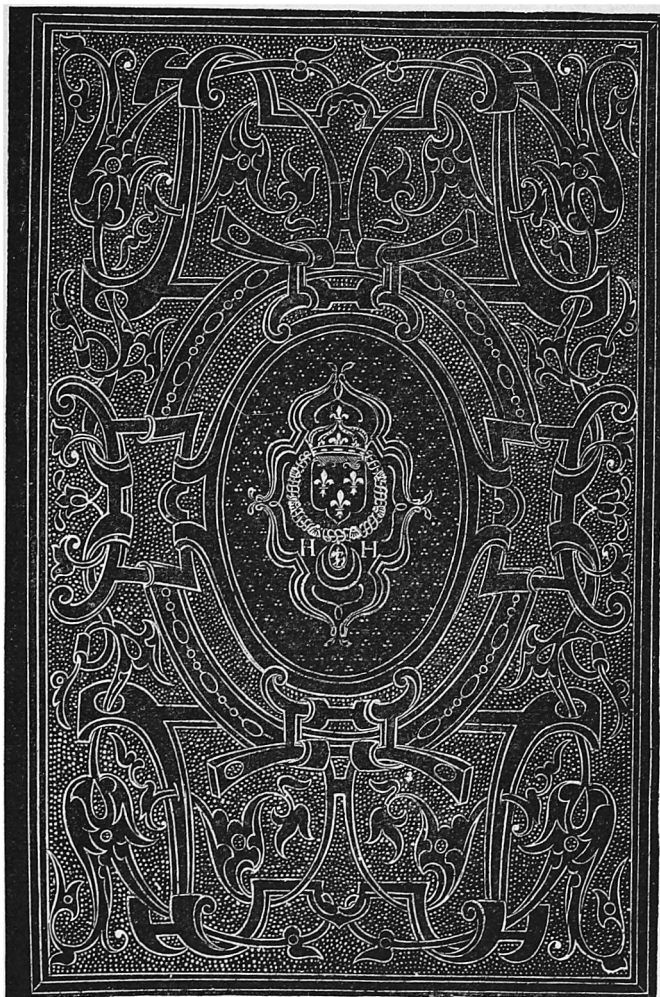
Velvet was used at a very early period. Richard, Bishop of Chichester, bequeathed (1258) to the four orders of friars, each one part, glossatum, which means with marginal notes; and missals were frequently covered with velvet, and studded with jewels. A very effective style of binding prevailed during the greater part of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which ladies of the present day might imitate with advantage. It consisted in working in gold and silver threads, blended with silk, ciphers, devices, and mottoes, on grounds formed of richly colored velvets. Two singularly fine specimens of this kind of binding are preserved in the British Museum. The one is a copy of Parker's "De Antiquitate Ecclesiæ Britannicæ," of the date 1572, and which is remarkable as being the first book printed at a private press. The design is composed of deer sporting among trees. The other is a copy of the Bible bound for James II., showing on the cover his initials surmounted by a crown, and surrounded with branches of laurel, the four corners being filled with cherubim. The invention of printing had a great effect upon binding, for, as it made books less rare, it made them less precious. Besides it would have been impossible to produce in great numbers such costly bind-

ings. Therefore, it is from this time that bookbinders begin to be of importance. Books were not given to the goldsmith or jeweller to finish, except on rare occasions. Thus the bookbinder could follow his trade without danger of overstepping its bounds. The privileges of every craft were jealously guarded.

One way of varying the styles of coverings is to use leather of different colors. Sheep-skin, calf, shagreen, and morocco all take the dye which wool and silk will take, but the most varied and richest hues are given to morocco. Russian leather dyed red with sandal-wood enhances the bindings not only by its odor, but by keeping away all sorts of insects and worms. The edges of books may be smoothed or chased; but the simplest way is the best, as any inequality in the surface is sure to produce a receptacle for dust. The old binders introduced the marbling of the edges, believing that this would prevent spots from being seen. Gilding naturally strengthens the edges of the leaves.

The art of gilding upon leather is very delicate. A small number of stamping irons suffice to vary the design indefinitely. With care can be produced the beautiful lace-work after the manner of Duseuil, one of the most skilful binders of the seventeenth century, or the dotted ornaments called "mille points," in which Gasçon excelled. The gilder upon leather has many ways of varying the arrangement of his stippling, as may be noticed in the example we give of the binding bearing the arms of Henry the Second, taken from a book of 1587, in the National Library, Paris.

The taste and beauty displayed on the various bindings executed for that distinguished connoisseur and patron of literature and art, the Chevalier Jean Grolier, Viscount d'Aguisi, coupled with the fact that his name, without any prefix to indicate his rank, is stamped on every volume which was in his library, have led the public very generally to consider him as the master workman employed in their production. The delicacy, simplicity, and beauty of the designs employed by him



BINDING WITH THE ARMS AND CIPHER OF HENRI DEUX.

are known to all collectors; and the great prices books of small interest in themselves have sometimes brought at auction on account of these bindings may be taken as a proof of the high estimation in which they are held. His designs consisted of bold gold lines arranged geometrically with great accuracy, crossing one another and intermixed with small leaves or sprays. These were in outlines, shaded or filled up with closely worked cross lines. Not, however, satisfied with these simple tracteries, he embellished them still more by staining

and painting them black and white, so that they formed bands interlacing each other in a most graceful manner.

The example of binding made for Grolier illustrated herewith bears his name and device. The book is a folio by Euthymius Zigabenus, being a commentary on the Book of Psalms, printed at Verona in 1530. Any stiffness in the straight lines in the designs of this master invariably is relieved by the grace of the curves.

In the seventeenth century the French bookbinders began to surpass even the Italians, and produced two renowned masters, Gasçon and Duseuil.



MOTIVE FOR A BINDING. 1587.

Gasçon flourished under Louis XIII., and was celebrated for his gildings with the small points, which he varied with wonderful delicacy and ornamented with dots. It is said that he was the first to cover with morocco the outside and inside of the cover. The workmanship of his bindings is quite worthy of their decoration, being especially remarkable for the care with which the margins have been preserved, their firmness, and the beauty of their finish. This master, notwithstanding his brilliant fantasies, has probably had the least number of imitators. Zaehnsdorf, an English bookbinder of eminence, who has recently written an excellent treatise on the "Art of Bookbinding," says: "Although he followed the ancient ideas, and kept the same shapes, the aspect of his bindings was very much changed by the application of pointed tools. Gasçon rests for ever as the most renowned master of the sixteenth century. The number of tools necessary for the execution of a composition like one of Gasçon's is large, and when one considers that these tools are repeated, perhaps a thousand times on each side of the book, a fair idea may be formed of the magnitude of such a work. I am of opinion that Gasçon brought bookbinding to its highest point of richness and finish. His drawings are always pure and correct; his squares, lozenges, triangles and ovals are so brought together as to form a series of compartments interlacing the one within the other, with an incomparable boldness and perfect harmony; above all, one must remark with what richness the compartments are filled. There is no doubt the ground work of the style was Grolier, but he never filled his panels with such richness or with such taste as that displayed by Gasçon. The difficulty of adapting such designs to the different sizes of books has no doubt deterred the various masters from imitating such works, so that we see less of Gasçon's style than of any other ancient master."

The bindings of Grolier are much prized for the beauty with which they are decorated with inlaid fillets of different colored leathers. This mosaic work is used only in the higher branches of bookbinding. Mr. Tuckett, the late binder to the British Museum, took out a patent for extracting one color from leather and substituting another by chemical action.

The patent has long expired. Mr. Zaehnsdorf gives the following extract from the specification: "Take dark chocolate color, and after the design has been traced thereon, it is then to be picked out or pencilled in with suitable chemicals, say diluted nitric acid; this will change the chocolate, leaving the design a bright red on a chocolate ground." But he does not commend the process, justly remarking that to lay on the various colors with leather is by far the better plan, as paint is likely to crack, and acids generally rot the leather,